

Safe Boating Habits = A Safe Cruise



If you're planning to take to the water on a boat, Jet Ski or other watercraft this summer, practicing safe habits can help you avoid tragic or costly accidents.

People can get caught up in the fun and excitement of water activities and forget to put safety first. Water safety doesn't require a lot of time and effort -- just some caution and common sense.

The HTSI safety office offers the following safety tips for enjoying water activities:

- ♦ Don't operate a boat or other watercraft if you have been drinking alcohol or using drugs. They impair reaction, timing, and judgement.
- ♦ Be aware of your surroundings and watch for people in the water, other boaters, and personal watercraft.
- ♦ To avoid injuries, turn off the engine when near individuals in the water. Adults and children must have approved life vests that fit all individuals on the vessel.
- ♦ Don't stand in or on a vessel while it is in motion.
- ♦ Try to minimize distractions while driving. If you're the driver, watch the horizon and let one of your passengers observe the skier (and assist in watching out for other boaters).
- ♦ Don't overload your vessel. Not only is it unsafe, but you could be cited by the Coast Guard or local authorities.
- ♦ Always secure loose items in the boat.
- ♦ For boats, be sure to turn on the blower after fueling and prior to starting the engine.
- ♦ Watch the oil, temperature and other gauges for signs of problems. Ignoring warning signs can result in costly repairs.
- ♦ Be sure to check the engine compartment to see if the battery is secure and the cables are tight. Check fuel line for leaks or signs of wear or cracking.
- ♦ Check the vessel's fire extinguisher to make sure it has not expired and that it meets marine safety requirements. Take time to remind passengers where it is located on your boat.
- ♦ When towing your watercraft, don't cut corners short. Watch carefully when backing up and be aware of what's behind you.

